

Anthony Shostak  
Greene  
LD 618

I am writing in support of LD 123 - An Act to Eliminate the Educational Purposes Exception to the Prohibition on the Dissemination of Obscene Matter to Minors.

I am a parent of two teens. My career for these past thirty-plus years has been in education, and I sit on the board of directors of my local school district. Please note that my opinions expressed in this letter, though informed partly by my experience as a school director, should in no way should be construed as representing the board as a whole.

Why there is obviously obscene matter in school libraries beggars comprehension. Anyone who supported the law to allow the exemption this bill would remove should understand how their good intentions have been perverted. I had to review a book challenged in our district. This book contains the sexually explicit image of one person's phallus firmly planted in someone else's mouth. That sentence bears repeating: It is as graphic and explicit as the hardest of hardcore pornography. Allowing school librarians to place this in the hands of children is an egregious lapse of judgement.

That lapse of judgement has knock-on effects; for one, it makes the job of a school director incredibly difficult. When righteously indignant parents challenge these obscene materials, the district's lawyers caution that removing the book opens the school to First Amendment lawsuits. Do we remove the book for the good of the children in our district, or do we protect the district from litigation? So, you see, you legislators have created a problem. Obviating the situation by preventing these books' presence in school libraries is the obvious solution. Eliminating the Educational Purposes Exception to the Prohibition on the Dissemination of Obscene Matter to Minors will do just that.

In addition to allowing school directors to concentrate their attentions on policies and fiscal matters instead of wading through community-dividing obscenity challenges, eliminating the exemption will help school librarians more wisely invest tax dollars in materials more germane to the subjects taught in public schools and more suitable for the immature minds of the students. There are ample examples of books and movies that present the same subjects as those in the obscene ones, but without the obscenity, without the graphic explicitness of the particulars of someone's ejaculation, the ease with which someone's several fingers slipped into someone else's (choose an orifice), or the sensations of rhythmic penetration. One does not have to resort to obscenity to portray the diversity of human experience.

If the aforementioned book with the fellatio image were a movie, it would have been rated NC17. No adult, not even a school librarian, would be allowed to bring a minor into a theater to watch it. No exceptions. Why then, do we allow this awful stuff—things that once seen cannot be unseen—into a school library? I'll tell you why: because Maine's legislature thought it would be a great idea. That was a horrible decision.

Now is your chance to undo that mistake, to right a wrong, for the good of our children and the future of Maine and our nation.

Please give your vote in support of LD 123 - An Act to Eliminate the Educational Purposes Exception to the Prohibition on the Dissemination of Obscene Matter to Minors.

I am writing to urge you to support LD 618 - An Act to Eliminate Critical Race Theory, Social and Emotional Learning and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from School Curricula.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are intellectually flabby, dishonest, and divisive. They promote a culture of grievance and

victimhood that is poisonous to a diverse society built on mutual respect.

CRT and especially DEI undermine humankind's instinctual admiration of ability and achievement by lowering standards in the name of reparations and/or equitable outcomes. They promote group identity as more important than individualism, reducing persons to mere members of one group or another—groups most often based on immutable characteristics like race. Because of CRT and DEI, school personnel are instructed in professional development workshops to put up pictures of people from a group to serve as role models for that particular group. They are selected because of their identity, not because of the importance of their achievements. This is anathema to America. If we allow such DEI initiatives as this, where does it end? Do we have enough classroom wall space for pictures of people from every conceivable identity group? After we have photos of people from the various Peoples of Color, all unhelpfully misspelled with X's and accompanied by so-called and often impronounceable pronouns like "xer", will we the need representatives of the double-amputee Polish community? That isn't sarcasm, because if one is to be truly diverse and equitable, every single possible identity group will need to have their spotlight. It is ridiculous.

You may not have noticed, but Maine's public schools are not exactly renowned for their excellence. We graduate students whose reading and math skills are below level, and whose understanding of science, history, and civics is embarrassing. High school teachers in my district have publicly complained that students arrive from the middle school without the knowledge to succeed in high school. Why is that? Partly because we have moved away from teaching academics, making them take a back seat to "educating the whole child" and to making them "feel safe." How about instead, we make them feel smart and capable by focusing on things that actually matter in the real world of adult life? Things like math, science, literacy, an understanding of how our government works, and history that doesn't make them hate themselves or others because of the color of their skin.

One of the things I hear parents say to their school boards most often is that they want the schools to concentrate on the basics. Keeping CRT and DEI out of the schools will allow them to do just that.

I urge you use your vote to support LD 618 - An Act to Eliminate Critical Race Theory, Social and Emotional Learning and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from School Curricula.